

My Riverbed Has Dried by theproblematicgay

Series: 'Til I Breathe My Last Breath [1]

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

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Summary:

It was only ever meant to be a casual thing.

He'd fucked them both over, really, hadn't he? He couldn't have just made one time enough, like it *should* have been.

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Billy refuses to acknowledge it, let alone say it. But he does. He loves Steve. Loves him more than Metallica, and pancakes, his goddamn Camaro even. He doesn't care about any of it. Not if Steve's not there – to complain about how loud it is, to *turn it down, for Christ's sake,*

Billy; for Billy to steal them off his plate 'cause his just happen to taste better; to kiss him in the backseat like he's drowning and Steve is air. Billy can't imagine a bed, his car, goddamn Hawkins without Steve.

1. After

Author's Note:

‘Like Hephaestion, who died
Alexander’s lover. Now my riverbed
has dried.’ – *The Mystery of Love*

<http://www.ancient-origins.net/history-ancient-traditions/what-was-real-relationship-between-alexander-great-and-hephaestion-006263>

Okay, disclaimer or whatever, I don't own shit - obviously.

FEBRUARY 1985

Steve slept like the dead. Billy watches as he turns his face into the pillow, mouth open a little, and God, he wishes he had a camera.

There are strings of Christmas lights still up in Steve’s room even though it’s been about two months since that holiday had died and Billy had laughed at first, offered to help Steve take them down, but they’re familiar now. He liked how they painted Steve’s face in a muted glow as he slept, the slow bursts of colour flaring red and green. He would miss it, he thinks.

Steve turns eighteen in a month and Billy doesn’t know what to do anymore. He’s tried to convince Steve to come with him after his birthday too many times now to bring it back up without starting another argument. Now, he’s just savouring the time that’s left,

hoping Steve'll change his mind before Billy can't cope in this town anymore. Steve wants to fucking *stay*, wants Billy to stay, but Hawkins is Billy's idea of Hell. He's had the idea of leaving stuck in his head since he'd had to leave California; it had been the only thing keeping him from drowning himself in a goddamn puddle at more than one point.

It was only ever meant to be a casual thing, the thing that they'd had going, but Billy had just had to fuck it up by kissing him, fucking it up more when he hadn't stopped. He'd fucked them both over, and he doesn't really know whether he regrets it or not, if he's honest.

~

JANUARY

After everything that had happened, despite it all, Billy had still stuck around after his eighteenth.

Max had turned fourteen two weeks ago, and he'd left a new skateboard on her bed whilst she'd been out. If she'd kept it, he didn't know; neither of them acknowledged it or behaved any differently. She still glared at him over her breakfast in the mornings, still refused to even look at him in the car when he drove her to school. She'd turned her head, held her breath where she was sat on the sofa beside Susan the last time Neil had shoved Billy into a wall, hissing about *respect* and *responsibility*. He couldn't blame her.

He'd driven out to the quarry to chain-smoke his way through a pack of cigarettes and sit on the hood of his camaro, as he did every now and then when there were fresh bruises blackening under his shirt or his mouth tasted like blood. He thinks absently that he is in fact a peaceful person. He just happened to be filled with rage. Everything was fucking unfair and he'd accepted that when he was kid, *had to*,

goddamn it, but that didn't mean he could just accept his dad for what he'd become over the years.

Technically, Billy *could* leave. He just needed gas. And money. Honestly, he was just surprised that his dad hadn't kicked him out yet.

He'd gotten a job back in November at a garage on the edge of town, far enough from his neighbourhood and his school that he never knew anybody who came in. There was a little jar underneath his bed and every dollar he'd earned whilst working there had gone in it. There'd been enough times he'd been tempted to break it out and just get wasted, drink himself to near-death after a particularly bad day, but it was still there, the lid gathering dust.

Billy had spent New Year's at a friend of Tommy's – Jared, or James. He's in their Chemistry or something. He had already been sick of the noise and the taste of cheap alcohol by midnight, punching Tommy when he'd knocked his elbow in Billy's side. He had gone to get high, not to be reminded of his dad and the bruises that he'd put there two days before. Tommy had simply swore, stumbling off to refill his cup and murmuring about *what an asshole Billy Hargrove is* to anyone that had listened or just turned their head in his direction. He'd rolled his eyes and winked at the girl that'd been hanging off his arm, close enough that he could smell the beer on her breath. He'd detached himself from her grip, making the excuse of needing the bathroom and had went to hunt one down, desperate for a lockable door and at least two inches of fucking space.

He'd spotted Harrington after that, had crowded him up against the bathroom door and said something he couldn't exactly remember, something awful, but he had been trying too hard to really be cruel. He does remember the look on Harrington's face after he'd said it, though, his furrowed eyebrows and lip curled in a grimace, telling him to *fuck off*. He'd followed him into the bathroom and locked the door behind him and Harrington had glared at him, stupidly drunk and, god, Billy hadn't known what the fuck he was doing.

"What?" Harrington had glowered at him. "I don't want to fucking fight you right now." He'd leant heavily on the sink as he'd spoke, eyes half-open.

The rest was a bit of a blur to Billy, all he knew was that in the end, the door had stayed locked and Harrington's breath had tasted like cheap vodka. He'd pressed him up against the wall, craving a warm mouth and the hands on his shoulders, drawing him in closer. And whilst he'd known there were a ton of girls he could've had instead, he'd also known that they just wouldn't satisfy the *want* low in his stomach – he'd wanted *Harrington's* mouth, wanted to kiss that fucking expression off his face, bite his lip and push his tongue past his teeth. He'd half-sat him on the sink, shoving him back with hands gripping the backs of his thighs to pull them up around his hips as his mouth had left a trail of little bruises down Harrington's throat, leaving the skin slick with his spit and speckled with splotches of red.

He could have blamed the alcohol, a little too delirious and a little too drunk, but he couldn't lie to himself; he'd wanted it for fucking *weeks*. He had woken up the next morning with a headache that could've rivalled a bullet to the head, the vague memory of what Harrington had tasted like still on his tongue and the hope that Harrington wouldn't remember a fucking thing. The next time he'd seen him after that had been at the first practice since before Christmas. There had still been the bruises left on his face from that night at the Byers', pale and faded somewhat but still there and Billy hadn't been able to drag his eyes away. He felt like an asshole and he knew that he should've apologised but fuck if was he actually going to. Billy hadn't known how he'd felt about the fact that the bruises he'd sucked into Harrington's skin just a few days before were brighter than the ones he'd left behind back in December.

There'd been nothing to suggest that Harrington actually remembered what they'd done; he'd ignored Billy just as much as he had before Christmas and continued to glare whenever Billy spoke. He figured that it'd probably be for the best if he just pretended that he couldn't remember New Years as well as he actually did, pretended that Harrington hadn't become the bane of his goddamned life lately.

The quarry is a sort of peaceful rarity for Billy. He came here when he couldn't get the image of the sea out of his head, hating the cold and missing the Californian sun, missing the way his mom used to smother him in sun block and ruffle his hair when he'd try

desperately to escape, running for the water and looking back over his shoulder at her, waving, hair in his eyes, sand stuck to his skin. If Billy leans his head back against the windshield, baring his throat to the breeze and releasing all the breath in his lungs, he can almost pretend he's back on that beach.

There was never anybody around to see him fall apart little by little here.

He sees it in the corner of his eye, movement, that isn't the leaves. He turns his head to see Harrington – *speaking of the fucking devil* – disappearing into the trees, backpack slung over his shoulder as he doesn't look back. Billy shrugs, resting back against the camaro, pointedly thinking *why the Hell should I care?*

He sighs when he ultimately wrenches himself up, rolling his eyes at everything and nothing in particular. Once he's stood where Harrington had been not even minutes ago, eyes darting between the trees, searching, he can't see anything that suggests he'd even been there at all. Billy just sits back on his car and smokes his way through the last of his cigarettes, and even though two hours end up passing before he leaves, he doesn't see Harrington again, or his car when he's driving back. He tries not to think about it too hard for fear of a headache.

~

Billy ends up being the last one to leave after Thursday's practice. He's tugging his shirt over his head when lifting his arm pulls at the bruise at his side painfully and he groans under his breath, quiet. He grits his teeth and reaches for his bag, wanting to leave already so he can sit on his car for a while before he has to pick up Max and deal with the glares she lives to send his way nowadays. Harrington is sat near the door, though, watching him and though he'll deny it 'til the day he dies, he startles a little.

"Harrington?"

He keeps staring for a minute. “What happened at Jake’s party?” He stands up, as if Billy isn’t the one who beat the guy’s face in a few weeks ago.

Billy knows that he must look like a deer in headlights so he smothers the shock on his face, plastering on a thick smirk. “Why do you want to know?”

He leans against the wall but almost slips when Harrington pulls down the collar of his sweater to reveal the remnants of what had been vibrant bruises scattered along his throat. Billy would know, he’d been the one to put them there. Harrington doesn’t speak, just stares at him and Billy doesn’t know how to respond, what he should do. He settles for a stiff jerk of his shoulders that he hopes resembles a shrug ‘cause that had been what he was going for.

When Harrington doesn’t say anything else he makes to shove past him and out the door but a hand on his shoulder stops him. Billy glares at him, dropping his bag and the next thing he knows is he’s got Harrington pressed against the wall with his hand at the hollow of his throat where there’s a subtle red shadow of what Billy had done.

“What the fuck do you want?” He spits out venomously.

“Shouldn’t that be my line?” Harrington’s hands are curled into loose fists at his sides and he looks like he doesn’t know how this is going to end. Billy isn’t really so sure himself. He doesn’t think he can repeat that night at the Byers’, but he can’t let Harrington think-

“I don’t know what you’re thinking but I’m not some-”

“Do guys do that in California?” Harrington cuts him off. “Were there guys who did that?”

Billy speaks before he can really even fucking think about it. “Yeah.”

Harrington looks at him for a couple seconds, the anger drained from his expression as Billy feels it practically drip from his own. “Did you?”

Billy feels as if he’s answering a whole other question, glancing at the

colours painting Harrington's neck. He nods. His other hand, the one that isn't keeping Harrington against the wall, stings as his nails bite into his palm. He thinks of tanned skin and long hair that doesn't belong in Hawkins.

"I don't remember." Harrington looks a little lost now. "I know we were in the bathroom but I don't even know how I got home. Tommy, I think." His eyes dart up to meet Billy's unsurely. "But," he falters, words caught in his throat. "I just want to know what happened. What you did."

"What we did," Billy grinds out once he finds that he can speak again. "Don't make it sound as if I raped you." He rolls his eyes, trying for casual.

Harrington's eyes widen impossibly and his mouth opens, gaping, like a wound. "Did- did we-"

Billy stops him before he can finish that fucking sentence, before he can start fucking overreacting in earnest which is exactly what Billy *hadn't* been going for. "No. No. Jesus Christ." Billy draws his hand back to rub at his face, pinching the bridge of his nose and almost trips over his fucking bag, cursing under his breath.

"Then what-"

"We just messed around; nothing happened. Didn't even get off." Billy mutters, hand fisted in his hair.

There's a pause before Harrington speaks again. "You remember?"

"Some." Billy shrugs, and he's stupid enough to think that that's the end of it, that Harrington'll go home now or wherever else he likes to fucking creep around as if he's Bigfoot or something.

"I think I'm-" Harrington seems to bite down *hard* on his tongue then, eyes locking on the floor as he presses himself further against the wall.

Billy steps forward again, closing in on him as he searches Harrington's face for something he isn't sure he'll find. "What?" He tries to smirk but it's ruined with the way he sounds too curious for

his own good. Harrington doesn't say anything else, doesn't look up, so he adds, "A *faggot*?" And he doesn't mean to spit it like it's an insult but he's spent far too many years hearing his dad snarl the same word in his face to be able to say it gently.

Harrington's eyes snap up to meet Billy's as he flinches hard, looking like he's all too ready to deny it and too fucking frightened. It makes Billy want to snap his teeth.

Instead, he just shrugs, nods once and steps back a little. "So?" It's not a big deal, not really. Billy had known he'd liked boys just as much, if not more than girls since before his tenth birthday. His mom had figured it out, kept it quiet. His dad had known it too, he'd realised all too fucking quickly back then.

He figures it's probably a big thing in a town like Hawkins.

Harrington seems a little speechless at that, like that was what he least expected to come out of Billy's mouth. Despite that expression, Billy tries for casual when he leans in again as he narrows his eyes, his shirt brushing the stupidly bright sweater and their faces only inches apart. He doesn't even have to ask anything, Harrington doesn't have to open his mouth for Billy to *know*. He's more surprised that he hadn't known it sooner.

He takes his thumb and drags it across Harrington's bottom lip as it wavers a little where he's making to protest before Billy catches it between his teeth, bites it hard, tongue sweeping along the skin briefly. Harrington's gone still, Billy can't even feel his breath against his face, so he puts a hand against the wall, pretty much caging Harrington between it and his chest, and uses the other to cup his jaw. Harrington seems to get with the program then, realising that, *oh yeah*, he does want this as much as Billy evidently fucking does. His hand hesitantly grazes the bare skin of Billy's hip where the shirt has ridden up, recoiling back slightly in shock at the sultry warmth before pressing those cold fingertips back almost urgently.

They're both breathing hard when Billy puts a hand on Harrington's shoulder, pulling back a little reluctantly and watching how those brown eyes flutter to meet his gaze. He can see how Harrington's clawing for composure. Billy smirks, knowing his eyes are half-open,

pupils blown but he doesn't care 'cause Harrington's are too.

"You want to do something stupid?" Billy asks breathlessly, because he doesn't know how he couldn't ask, not with the way Harrington's lips are parted and spit-slick, pale skin flushed pink.

He's pretty, like a girl, but he's *not* a girl – his hands, his narrow hips, the curve of his throat – and Billy's sure that that's the problem, that it's part of the reason he wants Harrington so fucking much.

And that's how it starts.

Billy has never been able to let go of a good thing, even when he knows it's just a matter of time before it comes back to bite him in the fucking ass. He's never been able to say *I've had enough now*. But that's just because Billy's an idiot who doesn't know when he needs to stop; and when he does, he just doesn't give enough of a shit to.

Harrington's on his back, stripped of his shirt on his bed with his jeans open and Billy's hands at either side of his head as he tastes the cigarette smoke that's lingering in both of their mouths. Harrington had practically screeched the entire time in the car on the way back from that diner Billy likes because *I swear, pretty boy, the pancakes are a fucking religious experience*, hands gripping onto the seat out of fear and yelling at him to *slow the fuck down, you're gonna get us arrested*. Now, he's making similar sounds, drawn out and high-pitched into Billy's mouth as his hands tangle subconsciously in blonde curls. Billy doesn't know why he lets it slide, lets Harrington pull on his hair; all he knows is that if it were anyone else he'd have fucking yanked a clump of their own hair out in retaliation, and Billy likes Harrington's hair, so.

He digs his nails into those narrow hips, gauging little pink crescents into the smooth skin as he bites at Harrington's collarbone, licking at the new bruise he'll replace as soon as it starts to fade in a couple days. Harrington's legs wind around his waist, drawing Billy closer as he bares his throat, whining. He's addicted, can't get enough of the way Harrington becomes *this* when they're fucking. Billy shoves his hand down the front of his jeans and watches the way he writhes as if he's in pain, relishing in the ecstasy that just had to be fucking

Harrington, of all people in this godforsaken town.

It's just a couple of minutes before Steve's lips are wrapped around his dick, sucking almost violently, and Billy thinks that he's got to be part-vacuum or something. All coherent thought is quickly uprooted though when Harrington swipes his tongue across the slit, ripping a guttural moan out of Billy. He can't do anything other than tug a little fiercely at Harrington's hair, feeling all too helpless and simultaneously powerful as Steve practically tears the orgasm from him, tears welling in the corners of his eyes, collecting on his lashes that clump together thick and dark.

After, Harrington's on his back, head lazily tipped almost off the edge of the bed with a cigarette in hand, looking like he's never wanted to not move so much in his life. Billy thinks he's beautiful when those eyes flick over to meet his, tired and dark and Billy's certain that he doesn't want to move anywhere right now either. He's also pretty sure that Harrington's not supposed to smoke in the house, even though in all the time he's spent nailing him into his mattress and just lounging around like he lives there too, he's never once seen his parents, so he figures it's probably fine.

He plucks the cigarette from Harrington's fingers and is promptly surprised when there isn't even a protest. "You wanna go again, pretty boy?"

Harrington seems to debate it silently for a minute before he sits up, red-faced from the blood that had rushed to his head, and reaches for the cigarette. "Five minutes."

~

"I can't believe *he's* here."

Henderson is really getting on Billy's fucking nerves. All the kid had done since just letting himself inside as if he owned the goddamn place an hour ago was complain about Billy, glare at him when he

figured Harrington wasn't looking and whining that *just because Mike and Lucas have girlfriends now, or whatever, doesn't mean that they can just abandon me, right? Will gets it. Nancy broke up with you, so I guess you get it now too, right?* He'd thrown a sort of questioning glance at Billy after that and if he had even opened his fucking mouth, Billy would've thrown him out the window, Harrington or no Harrington there to try and stop him.

"He is right here, dipshit." He snaps and Henderson turns a glare on him that makes him really want to fucking laugh, never mind that he shuts up anyway.

Harrington shoots him a look that practically screams *watch it* – that Henderson can totally fucking see, which is ridiculously unfair 'cause Billy's the one that's fucking him, so shouldn't he be on his side, for the sake of his dick at the least? – telling the kid to shut up somewhat half-heartedly.

He doesn't even look up when Henderson asks what Billy's even doing there, so Billy decides that Harrington can get himself off later, the asshole, before he answers, "Fucking your babysitter," with a vicious smile.

Harrington chokes on his breath.

Henderson just looks like he wants to spit in his face, unamused. He rolls his eyes instead and Billy can see that Harrington is thanking fucking God that Henderson hadn't seen his expression. Billy's wondering when the brat is just gonna leave already so he can get back to what they'd started that morning, and possibly make more pancakes. He'd wandered downstairs earlier to find Steve in the kitchen, pancake mix in hand (despite it actually being too late for breakfast) and shouted *don't you dare*, startling Harrington who'd thrown the box across the room in shock. Still, they'd sat down half an hour later with pancake-mix pancakes a little defeatedly, the ones they had tried to make from scratch still stuck to the ceiling and in inedible pools on the linoleum.

He'd inevitably had to go home at some point.

Henderson had mentioned something about darts and hanging upside-down or something and Harrington had all but kicked Billy out shortly after that.

Max immediately shoots him a weird look from across the room when he opens the door and he has the urge to stick his tongue out at her. He all but swallows it when he notices Neil sat on the sofa, newspaper in hand and something cold in his eyes as he glares at Billy.

He wants to run to his room and lock the door, bolt out the front door and right back to Harrington's fucking doorstep, anywhere other than standing rooted to the stained carpeted floor of the living room when Neil says, "Susan was worried." He doesn't do anything but lower his gaze to his shoes, hands becoming shaky fists at his sides. "Where were you?"

He can't answer that. It's a trick fucking question, one that he's heard before. If he says *nowhere* he'll get the shit kicked out of him for being an idiot. If he says *just a friend's* he'll be slapped into next week for lying. He sure as fucking Hell can't say anything about Harrington, god help the poor bastard, 'cause then it won't just be him he'll have to fucking worry about. So he just stays quiet, bites his tongue so he doesn't scream *just leave me alone. He's not sure if it makes it worse sometimes when he does finally shut up.*

It's just five minutes before he's sliding down his bedroom door in a crumpled heap, blood slowly trickling in a thick crimson streak from his nose as wet tracks of tears drip from his chin. His hands are still shaking, curled in tight fists where his nails bite into his palms. The knock on the door startles him. He wouldn't have moved out of the way if he'd known it was just Max. She just stares at him for a minute, shell-shocked where she's stood in the doorway, wide-eyed with what looks too fucking much like fear.

"Shut the door," he mumbles, tasting the blood on his lips when he speaks.

When she comes and sits next him on the floor beside the bed he can't stop himself. He reaches out and grabs her by the arm of her

shirt, tugging her closer and wrapping his arms around her like he had years ago when they didn't want to hear his dad yelling and her mom crying in the other room. He'd listened to it alone as a kid before his mom died. He hadn't thought it was fair that Max had had to do the same.

He feels her stiffen and try to recoil before she relaxes into it. When he starts crying in earnest, gives in to it and little gasping sounds escape him, her arms hesitantly curl around his shoulders, light and gentle as if she's afraid she'll hurt him. As if she's afraid he'll throw her off.

"I'm fucking sorry."

He feels her nod. He can't see for the globs of tears in his eyes that distort everything but he sees the shake of her red hair as she does. "I know. You're a fucking dick." She lets out a little breath of bitter laughter.

"I'm really fucking sorry."

She just whispers *I know* in return. He doesn't care if she forgives him, doesn't think she should, he just wants her to know.

The next morning, Max doesn't glare at him over her mug of coffee at the kitchen table. He figures it's a win despite the fact that his eyes are still red and she knows exactly why they are. He watches as she grabs her new skateboard, already worn from use and yells to Susan that she's going out. It's only seconds after that that his dad emerges from his room, shaking off sleep as he sits beside Billy at the table. He reaches for the newspaper and scoffs at the headline, grumbling a comment about Reagan that Billy's pretty sure he's expected to agree with.

They sit there like that, Billy nodding his head and smiling a little forcedly at all the right times like he'd learnt years ago, heart lurching in his chest as he tries to think of every possible outcome of leaving before he finds a way to fuck it up, until his dad sets down the newspaper, turning to face him. "You see a girl last night?"

Billy shakes his head before he thinks better of it, thinking belatedly that it was a fucking good lie and he shouldn't have wasted it. "Just a friend."

His dad nods slowly, reaching for his cup. "Is that Henry's boy? Thomas, right?" Billy thinks that somehow, *somehow*, his dad will fucking find out that Billy's lying if he says yes.

"No." He's scrambling to think of someone his dad won't know but Neil had made a good fucking effort shortly after moving to meet almost everyone in town.

His dad's looking at him as if to say *I asked you a question. What did we talk about?*

"Steve," he relents. "From practice."

He knows he's fucked up. He shouldn't have made such a big deal about Harrington. His dad's gonna know that something's up, that something's being kept from him, something he doesn't want to know.

"Isn't that Harrington's kid? I thought they were away on business for a couple weeks?" Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck.

"Yeah." His voice is a rasp, and he can hear his own fucking panic in it, meaning his dad can too.

Neil looks at him a little suspiciously then. "He's there by himself?" He can't do anything but nod, slumping further into his chair as his dad shakes his head, looking disappointed, and Billy isn't sure who that's directed at. "Poor kid. So you went over, kept him company?" Now he can hear it, the underlying question in that voice.

He keeps his eyes downcast so he doesn't have to see it, focuses on steadying his breath so he doesn't have to think about California, about the beach and the smell of the ocean and Jason and the taste of blood and hospitals and why they'd had to fucking leave.

Neil stands and Billy almost jumps out of his fucking seat. He moves to stand where he can lean against the counter, and from where Billy's sitting he seems tower above him. Neil's predictable, Billy

knows because he is too, and every single time they've done this it's been the calm before the storm that unsettles him the most 'cause Neil only does it to make Billy think he's gotten away with it.

"Do you remember why we left?" Neil speaks softly, as if he's part of one of those stupid fake families on the shows Max watches. "We had to move because of you. *For* you." Billy really wants to fucking roll his eyes and say *don't even pretend like you did this for me*, but he knows what'll happen if he does. He knows what's going to happen anyway.

Neil moves fast and sets a hand on his shoulder, turning Billy to face him. "Don't ruin this opportunity. Look at everything we've had to sacrifice for *you*. Max had to leave everything she's ever known. I had to find a new job. Do you ever just stop thinking about yourself?" Billy's seething, but so is Neil. "But it's not even that, is it? You were just thinking with your dick."

Billy stands up and sneers in his dad's face before he can really stop himself. "Don't act like you did this for me. It's *your* fault. You're the one who nearly killed-" He doesn't get to finish his sentence, almost bites through his tongue instead when Neil's hand is suddenly around his neck, shoving him against the counter.

"Don't you speak to me like that," he snarls in Billy's face. "What do I have to keep telling you about respect and-"

"Fuck *respect and responsibility*," Billy grinds out, feeling the sharp edge of the counter digging into his back. "You just want someone to blame. Because it was *your* fault. You're the one who put a fifteen year old boy in the hospital." He spits it like the words are tasteless venom and that swallowing it for much longer would have left a hole where a part of him should have been.

Neil seems to think about it for a moment, eyes narrowed with a sick knowing look as they meet Billy's. "And what exactly had you been doing with that boy?" It's almost as if he was daring him, sneering in his face.

Billy had never been one to back down from a fight, whether or not he was going to fucking lose anyway, so he pushes back against Neil,

smiling somewhat animalistically when he bites out, "I fucked him."

He's chuckling under his breath, feeling like his lungs are going to burst and simultaneously breathless as Neil slaps him across the face. He grins red, knowing there's blood on his teeth, when he falls to the floor. He's laughing, hearing Susan starting to cry from in the living room. He laughs despite it all.

~

Harrington looks more surprised to see him than he should really. He stops his car in the middle of the road that Billy's found himself wandering along, cracking open the window to stare at him like he's finally lost it. Billy can feel the blood and rain dripping off of his chin and nose when he grins, feeling like he's made of plastic and paint rather than flesh and blood. His ears are ringing loud enough that he can barely hear Harrington over the downpour and the engine when he speaks.

"What happened?"

Billy laughs again, loud and bitter, shaking his head as if he's talking to a child. "You."

"What are-"

"It was all your fault." Wet strands of hair are sticking to his face, blonde blackened and dark with rain and he realises that he doesn't have his jacket, or his cigarettes. "It's all because of you." Harrington makes to get out but Billy brings his hand down sharply on the roof of the car, startling them both if he's honest with himself.

There's a lot that Billy wants to say, wants to scream it all in Harrington's face and smother him with his words 'cause they're suffocating him from the inside-out and it's not fucking fair that Harrington gets to be okay after all this. *You just had to make me fucking want you.*

“Billy,” he starts, like Billy’s some cornered animal and he’s afraid he’ll run off or bite him – like he doesn’t want him to go anywhere. “Get in the car.”

“No.”

“Please, we can talk back-”

Billy wants to hit him, wants to shut him up before he can finish that sentence because he *can’t* go back with Steve. He *wants* to, and that only makes it worse. “No. You don’t fucking get it, do you? It’s your fault. It’s your fucking fault.”

“What’s my fault?” Harrington yells, climbing out the car and getting almost-instantly soaked when he could be dry, could be wherever he was going by now, but here he is, shouting in the rain like Billy – like an idiot. “Tell me. What’s my fault?”

“Everything.” Billy hits the car again and his hand screams in protest along with him. “You ruined everything. I was fine before you made me-” Billy bites his lip hard enough that he tastes fresh blood on his tongue.

Made me what? A faggot? Made me want to spend every goddamn morning in his bed? Made me want him to feel the fucking same about all this? About me?

Steve seems to get it, despite a majority of what he’d actually wanted to say being caught in his throat. “I’m sorry.” He sounds like he means it, like he really is *sorry*.

Billy’s lip curls in a grimace. “Fuck you.” He turns his back on Harrington and carries on walking, no particular destination in mind.

Harrington shouts after him but a minute drags by and he stops. He doesn’t hear the car approach behind him and he doesn’t hear Harrington so he has no reason to stop, to look behind him, over his shoulder.

Tommy laughs at his face on Monday. “Who’d you fight this time, Hargrove?”

“No one,” Billy grumbles, shoving him out the way so he can get to his locker.

“Harrington?” He turns to look at him then out the corner of his eye, scowling. Tommy seems to take that as a yes. “Jesus, what’d you do to him this time?” At Billy’s face he explains, “He wasn’t in class this morning.”

He knew that Harrington was dramatic but he doesn’t think he’d skip school just to avoid Billy. He doesn’t know what else would make him miss Donnelly’s class. He wouldn’t want to get on that woman’s bad side for the hair on his head. He slams his locker shut, the freshman beside him jumping at least a foot in the air, and he ignores Tommy when he stalks down the corridor. He finds Harrington’s kids pretty easy, what with the way they’re yelling at each other and how Henderson seems to be losing his shit.

“Why the Hell would you tell him about the tunnels? You know what he’s like.” Sinclair looks pissed.

Henderson looks worse, as well as the fact that it looks like he hasn’t slept. “I had to. It’s not my fault he’s a fucking suicidal idiot.”

Max glances up at him when she sees him approach, elbowing Henderson and throwing Sinclair a warning look. “What d’you want?” Billy knows she doesn’t mean to be harsh from the way she’s looking at him like she’s concerned – either for her friends or him he doesn’t know or care – but she snaps at him like she’s really at the end of her tether.

“Where’s Harrington?” Both Henderson and Wheeler’s brother narrow their eyes at him then.

“Why do you want to know?” Wheeler asks a little too defensively for Billy not to take it as an insult.

Henderson beats him to snarking back at the kid though. “He’s

friends with Steve now, or something. He's always over at his place."

"How the fuck would you know, you little creep?" Billy's actually a little unnerved, but then he figures Harrington probably tells these little shits everything, so. "Where the fuck is Harrington?" He'd imagined that all he would've had to do is raise his voice around these kids and Steve would've come racing around the corner, ready to defend their honour or some shit.

They all look at each other a little despairingly, like they're having a silent conversation that doesn't include him. Finally, Henderson says, "We don't know."

"What d'you mean you don't fucking know? You never leave the guy alone." He throws his hands up, fisting them in his hair out of frustration.

"He just disappeared last night. He said he was gonna pick me up from Mike's but he didn't come." Henderson looks a little worried. "His parents are never home and nobody's seen him." Billy thinks about last night, about how Harrington had looked like he was in a rush before he'd pulled over.

He sighs, long and tired.

By the time he's in his last class, waiting for the bell to ring so he can drive by Harrington's, Steve Harrington had already been pronounced missing.

2. Hand of God, Deliver Me

Notes for the Chapter:

So yeah, I didn't die. I just blanked for like, a couple weeks and then I was stuck in France for a week with the most unreliable wifi, so.

I hope you enjoy - every read, comment and kudos is really appreciated. Thank you guys so much.

‘And what difference does it make
when this love is over? Shall I sleep
within your bed? River of
unhappiness. Hold your hands upon
my head, ‘til I breathe my last
breath.’ – Sufjan Stevens, *The
Mystery of Love*

Billy spots Hopper waiting at the end of the hall when the principal stops him as he's leaving class. *Shit. What now?*

“The Chief has some questions he'd like to ask you, Mr. Hargrove.” He has to bite his tongue so he doesn't say *it's* Billy. *Mr. Hargrove is my father* because he's already being looked at as if to say *what have you done now?* He doesn't need to make things worse.

He rolls his eyes as the Chief motions for him to sit down once he's in the principal's office, something all too familiar. “Billy, right? I'm Chief Hopper. You know Steve Harrington, don't you?” He nods, eyeing the door. “Well,” The Chief, Hopper, pauses, as if looking for the words and pulls out a cigarette. “Steve's missing.”

“Yeah, I know.” He mutters, itching to get out of the plastic chair that's far too small, digging into his back as it slowly turns his ass numb.

Hopper lights his cigarette, doesn't bother to open a window and Billy smirks 'cause he knows the principal is gonna be pissed. When he thinks about it, though, he'll probably get the fucking blame.

Hopper raises his eyebrow, and Billy recognises that look. It's the look he's been given every time he's been warned or arrested.

"How did you know that?"

"Harrington's kids." At that, Hopper looks like he wants to ask a thousand questions, but Billy beats him to it. "The kids he babysits."

Hopper nods. "Can you tell me when the last time you saw him was?"

"Yeah." Billy's tempted to lie, 'cause he knows it's bad when you're the last person to see someone who goes missing the next day. He figures that it's probably worse to blatantly lie about the last time you saw someone who goes missing, though. "Last night."

"And where was that?" Hopper leans forward, like he hadn't expected Billy to be the last person to see Harrington. Or he hadn't expected him to be truthful, at the least.

"Not even a mile from the quarry. Near that old abandoned place." Billy thinks it used to be a sanatorium, or a lab or something. It certainly looked as if it had been abandoned for years. "He saw me on the road and offered to give me a ride. I said no." He has a feeling that Hopper doesn't believe him.

"Why'd you say no?"

Billy isn't sure what wouldn't sound absurdly suspicious. He doesn't want to say that they had an argument, or that Billy had been in a bad mood. He certainly doesn't want to tell Hopper about the fact that the whole reason they'd had an argument, that Billy had been offered a ride, that Harrington had even spoke to him was only because they've fucked a few times now.

"Listen, kid." Billy *hates* that. He's not a fucking kid. "I'm not gonna lie, you're a suspect at this point. You're lucky no one pressed charges back in December." God, Billy hates that he fucking knows about that too. It seems like the whole goddamn town does. "And Lucas, that Sinclair kid you threatened, tells me you're not exactly the poster boy for making friends, especially not with guys like Steve Harrington." He was going to murder Sinclair. Fuck. "But," He pauses, like he's

trying to find the right words. "I don't think it was you." He exhales, breathing smoke in Billy's direction.

Billy doesn't know what to think about that. Any other cop would've jumped on the idea that Billy'd done it. Case closed. But Hopper's got that thousand-mile stare as he looks over Billy's head, deep in thought. He's not sure if he wants to know what he thinks about Harrington's disappearance.

He can't help but ask, "Why not?"

Hopper seems just as surprised at that, if a little less than Billy. "Because I know what can happen in a town like Hawkins." Billy isn't sure what the fuck *that's* supposed to mean, doesn't think he really wants to, but Hopper stands before he can ask anyway. "Come on," he sighs, as if he just wants the day to be over already.

Billy can understand that. All he wants as he trails behind the Chief, glaring at anybody who passes, is to climb into bed next to Harrington. Not fuck him or make out with him in the back of his car; just lie next to him, bury himself in the warmth of sleeping beside someone.

~

"This is where you saw him last?" Billy nods, wanting to close his eyes, open them and see only Harrington. "His car's got to be somewhere around here then; it wasn't in his drive and nobody around town's reported it yet."

They'd taken Hopper's truck to that stretch of road Billy had found himself trailing down only the night before, bleeding and wishing he hadn't said a majority of what he had. He wouldn't have, not if he'd known that he might never have seen the fucker again. He can feel how Hopper's still looking at him.

"What?" He doesn't need to turn his head away from the window to feel the gaze burning into the back of his head. He also doesn't really

need to hear himself to know he sounds like a petulant child.

“When’d you get in a fight?” It’s at that point that the throbbing of his cheek suddenly flares up and he clenches his jaw in response.

Hopper’s got that suspicious look again when he shrugs, trying to tear his eyes away from the trees ‘cause it isn’t helping. He doesn’t really blame him; he’d be fucking suspicious too.

A sharp glare of reflected light catches his eye, though, almost blinds him momentarily and he holds a hand out silently for Hopper to stop. The truck pulls over and it isn’t long before Billy can recognise the BMW, half-concealed under the shadows of trees in the late afternoon. It takes him a few seconds before he can follow Hopper to peer through the window. He doesn’t know if he wants for them to find Harrington in there, doesn’t know what else he’ll find if they do.

Apart from a single bent nail and a flashlight on the backseat, the car turns out to be empty. Somehow, that’s worse.

“Jesus, Harrington.” He fists a hand in his hair, gritting his teeth. “If you’re not dead I’m gonna fucking kill you.” He knows it doesn’t help, what the with way Hopper snaps his head toward him, but it’s true. He wants to wrap his hands around Harrington’s stupid, pale fucking neck and shake him; he wants to yell, *what the fuck have you done to me? You’re gonna give me a heart attack, you asshole.*

Hopper sighs, reaches into his jacket and pulls out a walkie. He’s expecting something along the lines of *yeah, I need backup* or *we’re gonna need a search party*. He’s not expecting, “Hey, kid. Yeah, I think I know where he’s at.” *Kid?* “No, you stay where you are. Dustin, I mean it. I’ll find him.” Fucking Henderson. Christ. “Yeah, *over*, whatever.” He actually rolls his eyes as he sets the walkie back in his pocket, turning to face Billy. “You coming?”

“What the fuck?” Billy’s staring down into a hole that pretty much sums up his idea of what eternal damnation looks like, or something. “You think Harrington’s down *there*?” It’s not that much wider than him but he can see by the way the steadily fading light falls it has to

be five, maybe six feet into the ground. “Oh, Jesus fucking Christ.” He sits at the edge with a regretful sigh, resisting the urge to curse again as he lowers himself down despite Hopper’s protests.

Once his feet hit the floor – which seems to be *alive* with what looks like roots writhing beneath his weight, *fucking Hell* – he notices immediately that he can only see a few feet in front of him, if that. “Throw me the light.”

“Kid, would you just fucking wait-”

“Shut up.” He waves a hand at Hopper, silencing him; he’d thought he’d heard something. All he can hear now is the faint continual hissing of the walls, reminding him not to get too close. “Why are there tunnels down here in the first place?” He holds the flashlight outward, arm outstretched, but he still can’t see a dead end like he was hoping for.

“I really couldn’t tell you why, kid.” Hopper breathes a bitter laugh, sounding as though he’s digging through the duffel he’d slung over his shoulder just ten minutes before.

A pair of thick wire cutters drop down beside him, followed by a heavy thud as the duffel follows. “Shit.”

There’s a noise then, something pained, inhuman-sounding and Billy grabs the wire cutters, wielding them in front of his face defensively as he steps forward. Another sound, a guttural moan that reverberates off the walls before it dies out, sends Billy’s hair standing on end. He can only vaguely hear Hopper shouting for him to come back now but he doesn’t dare turn around for fear that something will leap out at him from the shadows given the chance.

The light passes over the floor, shaky with the tremble of his hand and he almost trips over something that hooks around his foot. He sees the wall moving, rippling as he falls on his ass, jolting back and almost throwing the crowbar. There’s something reaching out to grab him and he recoils, back colliding with the other wall painfully, feeling it writhe through his jacket and he shudders, seconds away from not being able to control his breathing. Just when he thinks that he’s actually going to have a heart attack, the spores littered over the

walls breathe and he feels it in his lungs, how the air is suddenly thicker than it was before and-

He's holding the collar of his shirt over his nose when he eventually spots the eyes watching him from inside the fucking wall. They're wide and brown and, fucking *Hell*, it's Harrington.

"Steve?" He scrambles to his feet and he wraps his hands around the vines that have almost completely engulfed Harrington. "Jesus Christ, fuck, it's okay." He pulls hard on the vines that have twisted their way up his arm and he winces in sympathy once he can see how Harrington's fingers are swollen and blue. "I'm gonna get you out, don't worry."

He can't tear off the thick limb that is visibly tightening around Steve's neck so he scrabbles for the wire cutters he'd dropped and hacks away at what he can, listening to Steve's pained wheezes that echo somewhat eerily. He doesn't want to think about whether he should be worried if anything can hear them or not, he has his priorities right now and that's getting Harrington out of this fucking hellhole.

"Billy," He croaks, voice wrecked. His lips are cracked and his eyes are red; his face is grey, ashen, and Billy isn't sure what else he can do other than place a hand over Steve's, gentle, noting the violent shudders wracking through him.

He buries the sharper edge of the cutters into the vine that's gripping Steve around his ribs where it stems from the wall. It breaks off and after that, it's easier to tear the rest from Harrington with his bare hands, abandoning the wire cutters. Steve slumps forward into his chest once he's free, doesn't have enough energy to catch himself or even raise his arms. Billy thinks about it and realises that Steve must have been down here for hours at the least while he'd been sitting in class, watching the clock.

He wraps an arm around Harrington and half-drags him back in the direction Billy's *sure* he came from. Every direction looks the same. Fuck. He doesn't want to yell – what if something hears him? Then they'll be really fucked. But he also doesn't want to be stuck down a hole when Harrington actually loses consciousness either.

“Hopper?” He pretty much screams, sounding far too scared than he ever wants to sound and half-sure that he’s deafened Steve in the process but he really doesn’t care too much once Hopper shouts back.

“Billy? You find him?” He doesn’t have time to answer ‘cause all of a sudden, the walls are fucking *moving*, rippling and breathing like they’re about to give and reveal *something* that’ll want to eat him too.

He races toward Hopper’s voice, scared that he’ll drop Steve who’s stumbling after him with numb legs, eyes slipping closed every few seconds of their accord and he can *see it*, how they really need to get out of here, now. He sees the streams of light seeping through the ground, pulls Steve along desperately, and- he could’ve sworn the hole was bigger than that.

“Steve,” He takes Harrington’s face in one of his hands then, forcing him to look him in the eyes as he holds him up. “Hey, Steve. I need you to help me get you out of here, okay?” His voice is gentle when he speaks, far gentler than he ever remembers his voice being, but Steve looks like he’s about to keel over and *you catch more flies with honey* or whatever the fuck it is-

“Steve?” Billy’s surprised to hear Henderson, but when he looks up, he isn’t as surprised to see the blatant concern.

“Help me get him up there, shithead,” Billy grunts as he lifts Harrington as high as he can on his own.

Hands reach down to grip Steve around the arms, shoulders and pull him up. He can hear Hopper mumbling under his breath as he throws the duffle over his shoulder and reaches for the ledge, trying to bodily swing himself up. As he feels blades of grass brushing his forearms, an elbow digging into the dirt, Hopper grips his arm and hauls him over the ridge before he can shake him off.

Harrington is still, head pillowed in Henderson’s lap as the other kids circle him, talking incessantly. Hopper’s checking him over, and he doesn’t look too concerned so Billy takes it as a win. He reaches in the duffle and takes out a water bottle, twisting off the cap so he can splash some of it on Harrington’s face. Brown eyes snap open and Harrington splutters. He snatches the offered bottle from Billy’s hands

and drains it in a few long pulls. After, he leans back and just breathes for a moment, drawn out and deep.

“I thought I told you idiots to stay home?”

He sees the corner of Harrington’s mouth curve into a tired smile as he listens to Hopper and Henderson bicker about how it’s probably past the kid’s bedtime. His eyes flick over to Billy where he’s stood apart, stiff, with his hands left empty at his sides. It catches him off guard but, Billy smiles back despite himself, despite everything.

~

Just ten minutes after they’d been dropped off by Hopper, he’d had to get the nurse to kick out Henderson and Wheeler’s little shit of a brother. If not for his sanity, then for the way Harrington had rolled his eyes every five seconds; the way he’d started fucking coughing again after he’d laughed. The way they’d both had to pretend he hadn’t been holding Billy’s hand when they’d barrelled into the room.

Hopper had turned out to be useful after all. He’d managed to explain away the state of Harrington’s chest and the concussion he’d suffered. That, or the doctor had known more than Billy probably did. It had turned out that Steve had only needed to stay the one night, so the next morning he’d driven him home, a prescription for strong painkillers and an inhaler in hand.

He’s throwing his head back now, though, just four days later, hands fisting the sheets at his sides as Billy’s mouth trails down exposed skin, gently grazing the smattering of freckles with his teeth and soothing his shudders with flicks of his tongue. He sits up, straddling Steve’s thighs as he works the front of his jeans open with steady fingers. The curtains aren’t drawn and the room might as well have been set ablaze; there’s sunlight seeping in through the window and it paints the stretch of Steve’s stomach gold, irises sepia photographs

where they catch the light. Billy's hands reach out to touch of their own accord, fingers spreading, spanning Steve's waist and mapping his ribs as he breathes in, breathes out, eyelashes fluttering.

"Billy- shit. *Billy.*" Steve sighs his name like it's a prayer, hands curled loosely in the collar of his shirt as Billy's lips mouth silently across his throat.

Blunt fingernails rake along the nape of his neck as he pushes Steve back against the bed with a hand on his chest as he tries to lean forward, chasing Billy's mouth with his own. Shuffling down the bed, he rolls Steve's jeans and underwear down his thighs as he mouths along the expanse of flushed exposed skin, catching a nipple between his teeth before his tongue laved along the little pink bud. As he reaches Steve's cock, blush-pink and swollen, a tiny puddle of precome welling in the subtle dip between his hipbone and the concave curve just below his stomach where it had collected, Steve's hips jerk forward and Billy chuckles. The skin prickles under his warm breath as he uses a hand to keep him still. He leans forward and licks a stripe up the shaft, tongue then dipping into the shallow pool, the taste bitter, something holy and entirely *Steve*.

It's not long until Steve's back is arching, like the curve of the stained glass windows of the church he knew as a child back in California, hands fisted in the sheets until the knuckles turn white as Billy swallows around him. The drawn-out moan that follows is *obscene*, tapering off into barely a rasp as Billy pulls away with a quiet pop, lips and chin slick with spit as he collects what he can with a flick of his tongue.

He leans forward and catches Steve's lip between his teeth, biting hard before mumbling into his mouth, "God, you'll be the fucking death of me one of these days."

All too sudden and unexpected, Steve flips him onto his back so that he can settle comfortably between Billy's thighs with a shaky breath that brushes lightly along Billy's abdomen, warm. He laughs quietly, eyes meeting Steve's whose are wide, pupils blown. It's quickly replaced with a strangled moan that's ripped from him as Steve dips his head quickly, probably so that he won't back himself out of it before he can really get started, tongue tentatively sweeping up the

length of Billy's cock in a way that almost screams he's never done this before. He glances back up at Billy's face, looking like he's scared he's hurt Billy somehow, unsure of what he's done and should do.

Billy places a gentle but firm hand in his hair, thumb rubbing small soothing circles into his scalp. "Don't fucking stop now." He can't help the grin that spreads over his face when that seems to abate the worry in Steve's expression somewhat.

Steve's lips close around the head, soft and smooth against the sensitive skin, tongue swiping along the slit. Before Billy can tug on the handful of hair tangled between his fingers, Steve's already sucking a desperate breath in through his nose before pushing his head down further until he can't, eyes watering. It's abundantly clear Steve really doesn't know what he's doing at all, Billy realises as Steve chokes a little, pulling back somewhat ungracefully. But he's enthusiastic, and that in itself is hot enough for Billy; no girl he's ever slept with has ever been so eager.

"Don't hurt yourself," he murmurs under his breath as Steve's trying to catch his. "Let me."

Once the tears in Steve's eyes aren't threatening to spill over anymore, he guides him until he's got the head of his cock in that addictive wet warmth again. Steve's eyes are still locked on his face in a way that Billy knows he didn't mean to be hot, but it is, even if they're looking to Billy because he's relying on him for what he's supposed to do next, eager. Steve takes the pause as a sign to use his tongue, swirling it around the shaft before stroking it over the slit again.

It's when he starts sucking on what he can get comfortably in his mouth that Billy really starts to fear that he's going to come too soon.

"Jesus, Harrington," he gasps. "You trying to suck the fucking soul out of me?"

There are sudden bursts of colour behind his eyelids as he's forced to shut his eyes – colours he couldn't describe to save his life but can feel washing over every inch of him, kaleidoscopic. He feels embarrassingly close already.

He glances down at Steve once the tide has withdrawn somewhat where he's still gripping his hair loosely in both hands, body almost curled around his head. His eyes meet Steve's then, half-lidded, and liquid honey irises seeping that warmth Billy can feel washing over him burns through every wall Billy's ever built. God fucking damn it, *he loves him*.

Billy refuses to acknowledge it, let alone say it. But he does. He loves Steve. Loves him more than *Metallica*, and pancakes, his goddamn Camaro even. He doesn't care about any of it. Not if Steve's not there – to complain about how loud it is, to *turn it down, for Christ's sake, Billy*; for Billy to steal them off his plate 'cause his just happen to taste better; to kiss him in the backseat like he's drowning and Steve is air. Already, Billy can't imagine a bed, his car, goddamn Hawkins without Steve. And it's a fucking terrifying thought. It doesn't even matter that he's got Harrington's mouth on his dick – he honestly wouldn't care if they never fucked again. He just wants *Steve*.

He shuts his eyes, overwhelmed with the feeling and hears how the breath that Steve sucks in through his nose becomes ragged, catching in his throat. He pulls off, gasping for air through another rattling wheeze that sounds downright painful. When the air doesn't come he scrambles from between Billy's legs and scrabbles for the inhaler he'd watched Billy put in the drawer, violent coughs wracking through him.

Billy hears the way it rattles in his chest before it dies down. He's still sat on the bed where he'd been left when Steve finally sits back down on the edge of the mattress, sheepish. He looks over at Billy from under his eyelashes looking all too regretful. He crawls over after a second's hesitation, foot getting tangled in sheets in the process but reaches Billy's open arms nonetheless.

His hand closes around Billy after a moment where he's still hard, and it only takes a couple of tugs, Steve twisting his wrist on the upstroke and gliding a slick thumb over the head, before Billy comes ridiculously fast. He leans his head on Steve's shoulder, breathing in the scent of him as he comes down from the high. He hides a small contented smile in Steve's neck.

"You alright?" He mumbles.

“Are *you*?” Steve laughs at how hard he’s trying to catch his breath and Billy shoves him a little, but doesn’t let him go anywhere.

He gets up a little reluctantly from where they’re sprawled on the bed after a few serene seconds of Steve trailing his hand back and forth over his back. “C’mon,” he sighs, overdramatic and unreservedly euphoric. “I want pancakes.”

He’s grateful to see that the diner is practically empty from where he’s parked the camaro. There’s a little red-headed girl in yellow dungarees at the counter, about six or seven, devouring a pink milkshake as her mother smiles affectionately at her. He thinks of Max, something fond budding in his chest before he chases it away with a cigarette.

“I’m gonna go order pancakes and a strawberry shake. Meet me inside in five.” Steve gets out and Billy watches him go.

It was only ever meant to be a casual thing. He’d fucked them both over, really, hadn’t he? He couldn’t have just made one time enough, like it *should* have been. Still, he can’t find himself truly regretting anything. He doesn’t regret the morning he’d made with Steve; doesn’t really regret how he’d blasted Metallica until Steve had started yelling that he was gonna go deaf; *couldn’t* regret how Steve had looked at him that morning, pupils blown and lips parted, something adoring in his eyes that had burned straight through Billy like a cigarette put out on his skin.

He wants Steve; he *wants* that fucker, Harrington for Christ’s sake, in every goddamn sense of the word. Every ache, every fucking burst of *something* in his chest every time he looks at him. It scares him that he knows he wants everything – the nice domestic mornings that make him feel more human than he has in a long time, the violent outbursts that were inevitably coming their way, Hell, even the downfall.

But what did *Steve* want? At this point, Billy was more than ready to follow him to fucking Texas and back. He doesn’t want him to leave, just doesn’t want him to go anywhere, but Steve probably wants

things too. Billy just doesn't know what they are.

The knock on the window surprises him more than it should and he jumps, releasing the smoke he'd been holding in his lungs, feeling his way around the subtle weight of it sitting there in his chest. He rolls down the window and smiles, all teeth and attitude.

"You coming inside or what?" Steve's got that look on his face. The one that says he knows exactly what Billy's thinking.

"Yeah, yeah. Hold your horses, pretty boy," he rolls his eyes and grinds the cigarette into the tarmac once he steps out. "How d'you feel about making out in the bathroom?" Ducking his head, Steve smiles.